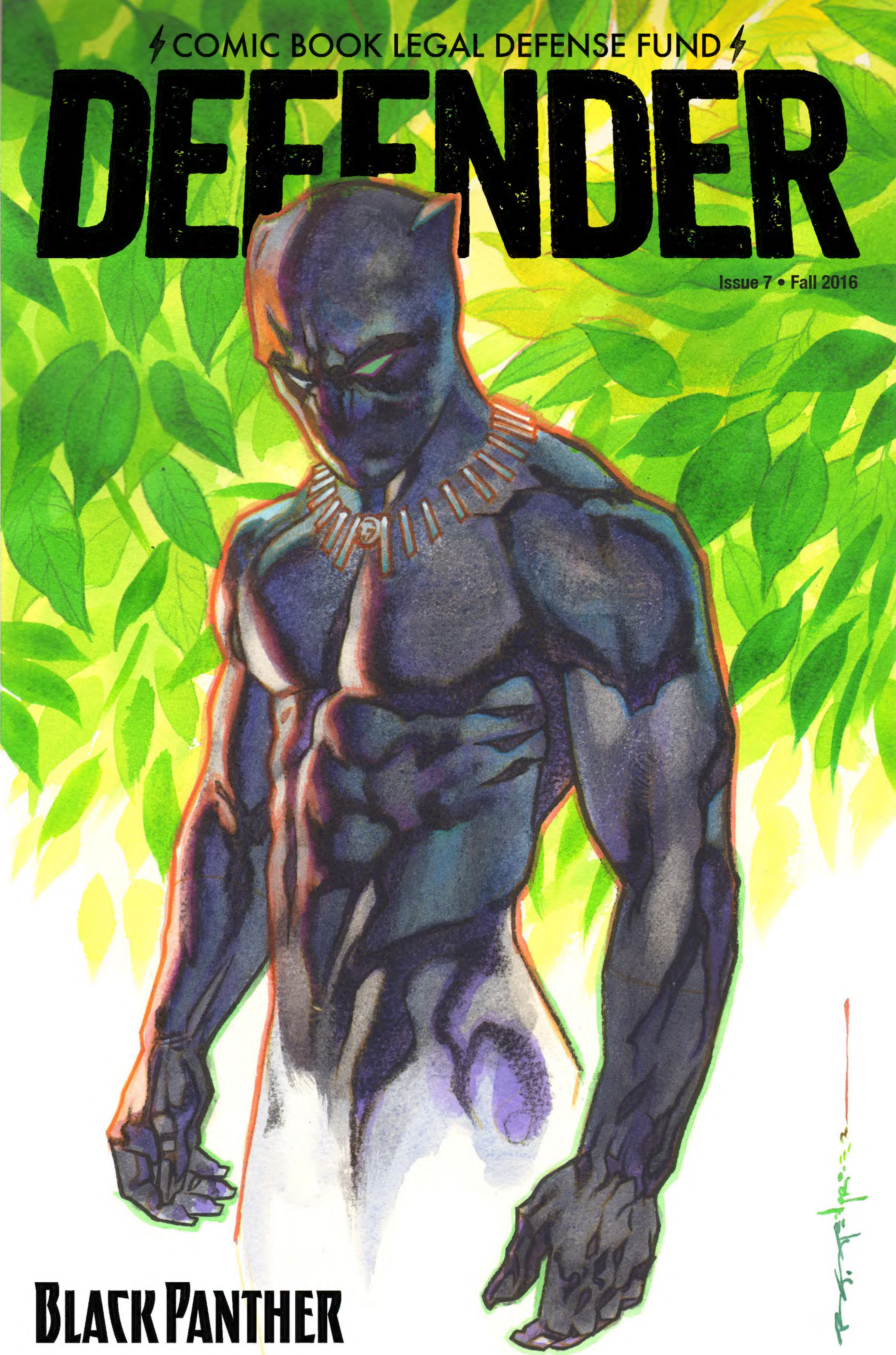
COMIC BOOK LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

DEFENDER

Issue 7 • Fall 2016



BLACK PANTHER

Director's Note

Censorship strikes in cycles, with swings between vast outbreaks of moral panic and moments of relative calm. The big panics tend to coincide with periods of great societal anxiety and fear. This issue of *CBLDF Defender* examines several moments in comics censorship history, including what's happening today. We ask you to compare these past moments with what's happening now, and determine for yourself: Is 2016 a time to be hopeful or a time to be concerned? Or both?

One thing to be hopeful about is that CBLDF's legal team is on top of threats affecting the comics community, and on page 3, we dive into the aspects of CBLDF's mission that are, by necessity, fighting "Unseen Censorship." While it's reassuring that CBLDF is on the case, it's hard not to be alarmed by situations like the one Steven Pastis found himself in when a *Pearls Before Swine* strip was pulled for prodding American attitudes about terrorism. Read more about his case, why some Florida parents say books are ruining kids, why a British citizen was detained for reading a book, and how Gene Luen Yang is working to encourage "Reading Without Walls," starting on page 4.

With Fall starting, it's time to celebrate Banned Books Week. This year's event asks why are so many diverse books banned and challenged. On page 11, we'll show you what diverse comics are banned, why we think that matters, and what you can do to get involved. Brian Stelfreeze is caught up in the heart of the conversation about diversity in comics thanks to his collaboration on Marvel's *Black Panther*. On page 8, he takes you behind the scenes of the book, and why he feels the cure to censorship is breaking down the barrier of "the other."

That feeling of suspicion and fear towards the other fuels many moral crusades, and has been a scourge in comics. In "The Bust," on page 11, Sam Meier takes us back to 1973, when feminist comics publisher Nanny Goat Productions was targeted by authorities in Orange County, California. On page 6, Caitlin McCabe focuses on a "Nightmare on Main Street," telling the story of how horror comics were targeted by media and legal panics in the 1990s.

Thankfully, 2016 so far isn't one of those watershed years containing a massive cultural assault on comics. But it is a time in which there are legitimate threats to speech, and comics are still being banned and challenged. It's important to look at the past to understand how those things can happen again in the future. Is the high rate of challenges to diverse graphic novels a prelude to the kind of organized harassment endured by booksellers in the Nanny Goat case? Does the activity of pressure groups in the media that led to the contraction of horror comics in the '90s mirror trends we're seeing today?

CBLDF wants you to talk about those questions, secure in the knowledge that whatever challenge arises, our team is ready, willing, and able to fight back when censorship strikes the comics art form.

—Charles Brownstein, Executive Director

CBLDF thanks our Guardian Members:

James Wood Bailey, Grant Geissman, and Philip Harvey

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UNSEEN CENSORSHIP

When a First Amendment emergency strikes, CBLDF springs to action. Take a tour of how your support helps us fight censorship!

FACING LEGAL EMERGENCIES

CBLDF's efforts to protect comics are wide-ranging. Our work takes us from courtrooms to classrooms, from statehouses to school boards, and into all manner of libraries. While we pride ourselves on educational efforts like this magazine and facing challenges to graphic novels in schools and libraries, our #1 mission is to help people when they're facing a legal emergency as a result of making, reading, selling, teaching, or lending comics.

This year, the Fund has faced a number of emergencies. Thankfully, we've been able to successfully manage the majority of them before the matter heads to court. The cases range from artists being served cease and desist letters for creating parodies to readers facing police investigation or even arrest for possession of comics alleged to be obscene. Other cases involve stores that need help with changes in local ordinances, affecting their ability to do business, and travelers who need guidance or support at customs. We also provide simple referrals to members of the professional and retail communities who need legal help.

These cases are largely unpublicized to protect the privacy of the people who reach out for our help, and often because negotiated legal matters require confidentiality. Even though we can't disclose the details, CBLDF manages several matters of this nature every year. So far in 2016, there have been five incidents, and last year there were eight. While those numbers don't sound significant, each case requires expert legal attention that would cost an individual thousands, if not tens of thousands, of dollars. The Fund is able to perform that work without cost to the person who needs our help.

PROVIDING EXPERT COUNSEL

Our legal work is overseen by Robert Corn-Revere, general counsel for CBLDF. Bob is a legend in the First Amendment world. His legal highlights include victories against the FCC, notably striking down their penalties in the Super Bowl XXXVIII halftime controversy, a case involving fleeting nudity. Bob also secured a posthumous pardon for Lenny Bruce in the state of New York, and authored the CBLDF brief about the history of comics censorship in the 1950s that was cited by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Brown v. EMA*, a case striking down an unconstitutional California law regulating the sale of violent video games.

This kind of legal firepower makes a difference when CBLDF stands up to threats affecting our members. Bob and his network of attorneys bring their significant expertise to bear, helping us stand up for the rights of our community, often before they need to go to court.

FIGHTING UNCONSTITUTIONAL LAWS

In addition to these efforts, CBLDF also takes an active role in fighting unconstitutional laws before they can take effect. We're currently challenging a law in Louisiana that has potential to chill the speech of web cartoonists and the business of comics retailers. Louisiana HB 153 requires websites to age-verify every internet user before providing access to non-obscene material that could be deemed harmful to any minor. A failure to age-verify, even if no minor ever tries to access the material, is a crime that could lead to a $10,000 fine.

The law violates the First Amendment rights of older minors as well as adults. Courts have held that older minors have a right to purchase books that deal with the subject of sex that are not appropriate for younger minors. However, the Louisiana law bars anyone under 18 from accessing "harmful" material. If a retailer places an age verification page at the front of a website, it would effectively bar all minors from buying all books.

Thanks to the efforts of CBLDF and our co-plaintiffs, the law has not yet taken effect as a result of a preliminary injunction we won last April and the judge's denial of the State's motion to dismiss. U.S. District Chief Judge Brian Jackson found that CBLDF and our co-plaintiffs are likely to succeed in our argument that the law is unconstitutional.

ONGOING ADVOCACY

Dismantling police investigations, defusing cease and desist notices, and fighting unconstitutional laws may not be the most exciting work to read about, but it's this day-to-day style of legal accomplishment that makes CBLDF such an important advocate for the profession. CBLDF's efforts to provide impeccable legal expertise and a deep knowledge base have actively defeated cases before they could reach a court room. Our long-standing existence also serves as a deterrent when ambitious prosecutors begin eyeing a small comic store or individual—they soon learn that the comics industry has an aggressive and well-supported organization willing and able to rise to the defense!

This work is deeply necessary, and it happens because of the support of donors like you! Visit www.cbldf.org to learn more!

Pearls Before Swine Strip Pulled for ISIS Reference

"Yes, for those of you wondering, today's *Pearls* strip got pulled," wrote *Pearls Before Swine* creator Stephan Pastis in a Facebook post. In a screen cap of a subsequent Facebook post, Pastis wrote:

> *I guess the fear was that it would run, and another terrible event would happen, and it would appear to be making light of it. So it could not run, and a repeat strip had to be used. For what it's worth, it was drawn over a year ago.*

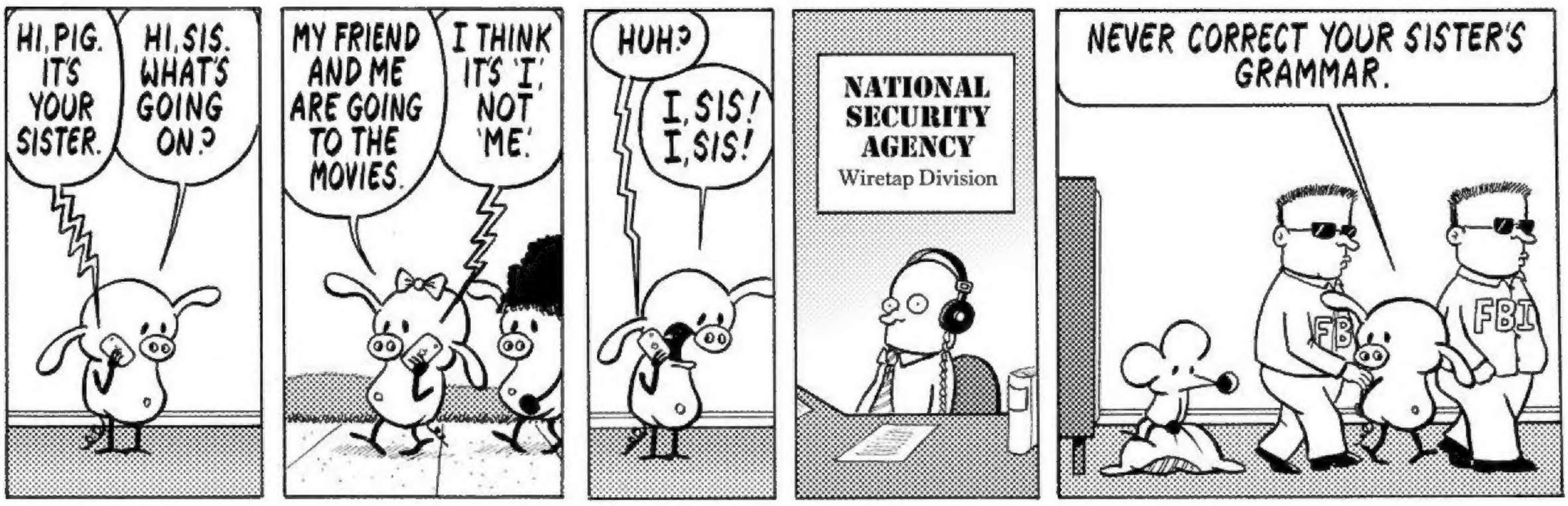
Pearls Before Swine is an award-winning syndicated strip that runs daily in more than 750 newspapers nationwide and features a cast of animal main characters that run the gamut from sarcastic alcoholics to endearingly oblivious foils. The July 27 strip used a pun to mock both the irrational fear of ISIS and the NSA's wiretapping practices. After it was pulled, Pastis tweeted that the strip "Seems harmless to me, but I guess these are sensitive times."

This isn't the first time Pastis has run afoul of would-be censors. He has had strips mocking the Bush administration attacked, and in 2007 he received death threats from Turkish citizens who felt his character Ataturk the llama was an attack on beloved former leader Mustafa Atatürk.

In a post regarding the pulled strip, the National Coalition Against Censorship writes:

> *It's sadly not uncommon for newspaper strips to face editorial redactions or censorship. Comics combine stylistic elements of books and visual art and are therefore challenged by censors for the same reasons other media are challenged; censors oppose their use of offensive language, inclusion of sexual content, and references to drugs, alcohol, or so-called "touchy subjects."*

As private entities, newspaper editorial staff are certainly within their rights to make decisions about the content they run. However, the removal of the strip raises concerns over self-censorship. Further, removal of a cartoon as relatively inoffensive at Pastis's buys into the fear that terrorists like those who attacked *Charlie Hebdo* and other cartoonists around the world are trying to instill in the populace. The answer to such fear isn't to remove a cartoon, but to support the free expression of those who would question the terrorists' actions and the authorities that overreact to terrorist attacks by stepping on fundamental freedoms.


HI, PIG. IT'S YOUR SISTER.
HI, SIS. WHAT'S GOING ON?
MY FRIEND AND ME ARE GOING TO THE MOVIES.
I THINK IT'S 'I,' NOT 'ME.'
HUH?
I, SIS! I, SIS!
NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY
Wiretap Division
NEVER CORRECT YOUR SISTER'S GRAMMAR.
FBI
Pearls Before Swine © and ™ Stephan Pastis

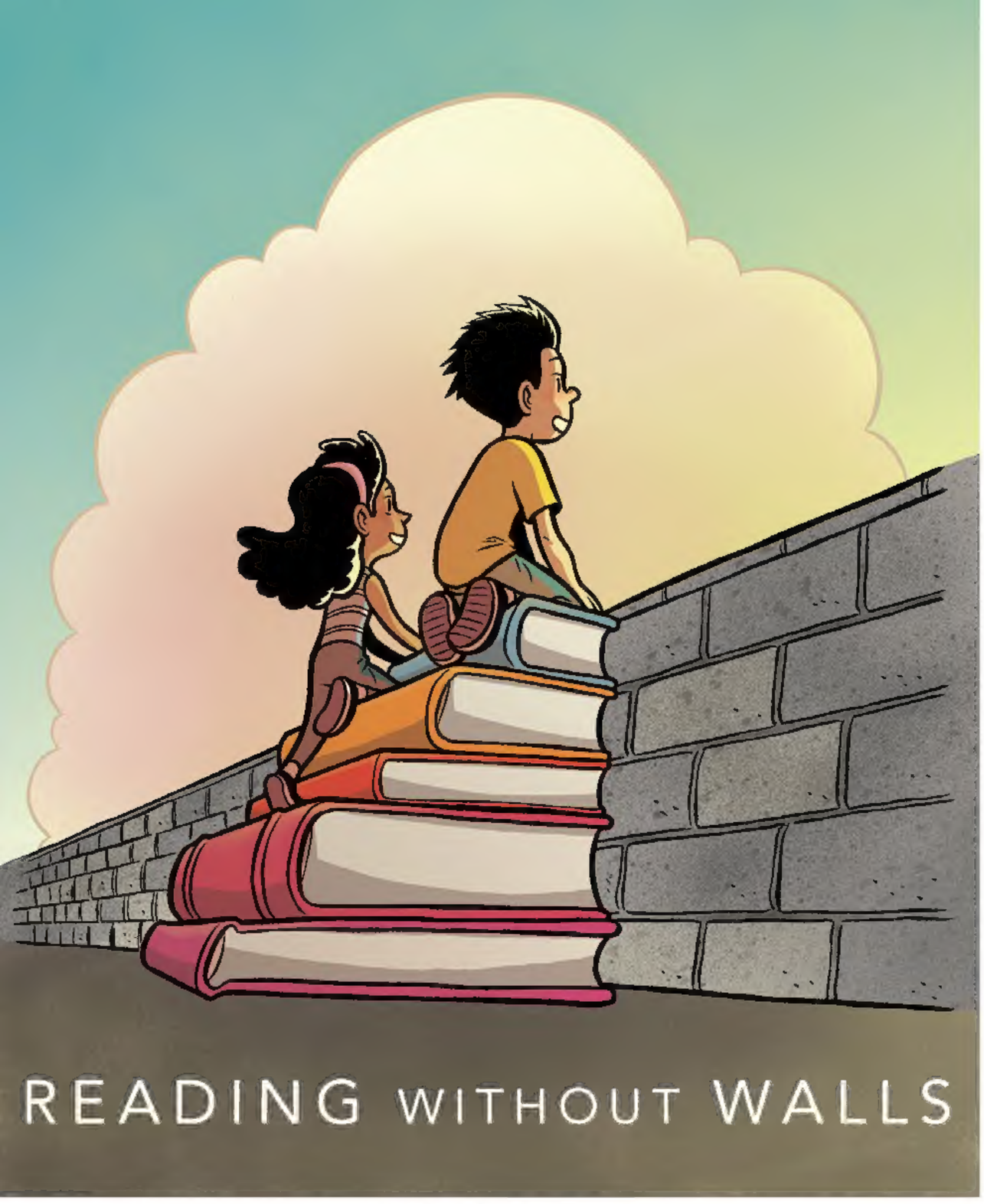
CENSORSHIP SCORECARD

CBLDF joins coalition efforts to protect the freedom to read comics. Taking an active stand against all instances of censorship curbs precedent that could adversely affect the rights upon which comics readers depend. Here are a few of our latest cases...

Chesterfield County, Virginia

DEVELOPING: CBLDF signed on to a letter from the National Coalition Against Censorship to the superintendent and school board in Chesterfield County, Virginia, defending several summer reading books that were challenged for "sexually explicit" content and urging the school district not to adopt warning labels or ratings for books, as some parents have demanded. Although the censorship campaign against optional summer reading books was initiated by other parents, it has been adopted with gusto by State Sen. Amanda Chase, who has three children enrolled in Chesterfield County Public Schools. Chase first suggested that the librarians who compiled the recommended lists should be fired and books such as *Eleanor and Park* by Rainbow Rowell, *Dope Sick* by Walter Dean Myers, and *Tyrell* by Coe Booth removed from school libraries altogether. Later she added that future summer reading lists should include warnings for parents on books that may be controversial.

Chase responded to the letter, saying, "National coalitions based out of New York should not dictate local school policy in Virginia. These issues are best addressed by a local coalition of parents, teachers and elected school board members at the local level, and at the state level where appropriate." The school board has yet to make a ruling and has stated that they will not do so until they have received and reviewed the report from the review committee.



Artwork by Gene Luen Yang.

Gene Yang on "Reading Without Walls"

Since being selected as the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature, comics creator Gene Luen Yang has hit the ground running, encouraging young readers to break out of their literary comfort zone to explore "Reading Without Walls." For over a decade, Yang has used his comics and background as a K–12 teacher to educate young readers on the importance of understanding global cultures beyond one's own heritage. Yang's own work speaks directly to his mission as ambassador to read without walls. "Exploring the world is an important part of growing up," Yang tells *Education Week* regarding his new program, which has three prongs:

> *1. Read a book about a character who doesn't look like you or live like you.*
>
> *2. Read a book about a topic you don't know much about.*
>
> *3. Read a book in a format you don't normally read for fun (a chapter book, a graphic novel, a book in verse, etc.).*

For Yang, the lessons learned by reading materials that take young people out of their proverbial comfort zones extend beyond the pages of a book. "Technology is making us more connected," Yang says. "Just to get things done, just to get through everyday life, you're going to have to interact with all these different people who don't look or live like you. Reading about these different people will prepare you to interact in an empathetic way."

Find out more about these stories and get the latest news every day at www.cbldf.org!

Florida Parents Blame Books for "What's Wrong with Children Today"

Two parents in Nassau County, Florida, are calling for the ban of two popular teen books, Lauren Myracle's *TTYL* and *TTFN*, from school libraries, blaming the titles for "what's wrong with children today."

The books are part of author Lauren Myracle's *The Internet Girls* series, which follows the adolescent adventures of three high school friends told entirely through text messages. Promoted as a series for the iPhone generation, the books have become immensely popular with teens since their initial publication over a decade ago, but they've also drawn calls for censorship. The series as a whole made the top of the American Library Association's frequently challenged books list for 2009. The series was challenged for drugs, nudity, offensive language, sexually explicit, and content unsuited to age group.

Brook Todd and Billie Thrift, who have children enrolled in the Nassau County school district, became upset when their children brought the books home from their school library. They expressed concerns over the profanity and sexually explicit language and age inappropriate content. "I was reading a lot of sexual content and some things that I wouldn't think high schoolers should have access to," Todd told Action News Jax. "It's telling kids to rebel against parents. It's telling them it's OK to party, drink, cuss and do other obscene things in the book," added Thrift.

British Citizen Detained at Airport for Reading Book

On July 25, authorities in the U.K. detained a Muslim citizen at an airport after a cabin crew member reported her for "suspicious activity." That activity? Reading a book celebrating the freedom of expression in Syria.

Faizah Shaheen was returning from her honeymoon in Turkey when she was detained. A cabin crew member had reported her on her outbound flight for reading *Syria Speaks: Art and Culture from the Frontline*, "a celebration of a people determined to reclaim their dignity, freedom and self-expression" that collects art and writings from more than 50 people. Among the contributors to the book are cartoonists, including Ali Ferzat, whose hands were broken by men likely connected to Syrian president Bashar Assad's government.

Shaheen was held under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act, which gives authorities at British airports nearly unlimited power to stop, search, and detain individuals. "I became very angry and upset. I couldn't understand how reading a book could cause people to suspect me like this. I told the police that I didn't think it was right or acceptable" Shaheen told *The Independent*.

Shaheen is a psychotherapist in child and adolescent mental health for the National Health Service, and her duties there make her one of the people least likely to be a risk. She tells *The Independent*, "Ironically, a part of my job role is working on anti-radicalization and assessing vulnerable young people with mental health problems are at risk of being radicalized. I said that to the police. I'm actually part of trying to fight radicalization and breaking the stereotypes."

NIGHTMARE ON MAIN STREET

In 1954, Congress investigated comic books, trying to determine whether they caused juvenile delinquency. So began a decades-long censorship crusade against comics—a crusade that haunts one genre in particular: horror!

Earlier this year, artist Joe Jusko unveiled a relic from the immediate past: the unpublished cover of the third issue of Marvel's short-lived series *Freddy Krueger's A Nightmare on Elm Street*, the first two issues of which were published in 1989. Published in an oversized magazine format, the third issue was never released despite the series' popularity. Anti-violence advocacy groups pressured the comic book adventures of everyone's favorite worst nightmare out of publication in the early 1990s.

Since the inception of the modern comic book, horror comics have been one of the most popular genres. From early adaptations of classic tales of terror like *The Strange Adventures of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Castle of Otranto* to infamous EC horror comics such as *Tales from the Crypt* and *The Haunt of Fear*, no genre was more targeted and more directly affected by the Comics Code than horror. Senator Robert C. Hendrickson, chairman of the 1954 Senate hearings, claimed that out of the "billions" of comic books sold each year in the United States, "hundreds of thousands of horror and crime comic books are peddled to our young ones of impressionable age." The hearings convinced the public that censorship was the only way to stop what was then perceived as a cataclysmic social epidemic.

Public morality had been saved. Or so people thought. In the 1970s and 1980s, a genre that seemed to have been regulated to extinction by the Comics Code, government authorities, and anti-violence advocacy groups was making a comeback in a big way in the form of comics, movies, and video games, and everyone wanted to capitalize on the

The covers for the first two issues of Marvel's *Freddy Krueger's A Nightmare on Elm Street* alongside Joe Jusko's artwork for the cover of the unpublished third issue. The series was canceled after two issues despite solid sales. (Artwork by Joe Jusko.)

(*Freddy Krueger's A Nightmare on Elm Street* #1 published by Marvel Comics, October 1989; #2 published November 1989.)

action. Warren Publishing's black-and-white horror magazines *Eerie* and *Creepy* were flourishing outside the purview of the Comics Code, and mainstream publishers were again dabbling in ghostly tales and haunted horrors.

For Marvel, the comic book version of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* was their ticket to the nightmare-laden show. In 1989, Marvel released the black-and-white comic magazine *Freddy Krueger's A Nightmare on Elm Street*, and it was an instant hit. Following the adventures of psychiatrist Dr. Juliann Quinn, the comic brought the horror of the big screen to readers' hands. Adopting the format used by *Creepy* and *Eerie* added a unique, nostalgic flavor to the series, and it proved to be the right choice to make what seemed to be an effortless success. "The comic book was presented in black and white, and [featured] quite a few striking images that are adored by hardcore fans who remember buying the comic when it first came out three decades ago," writes B. Alan Orange of Movieweb.

Despite the success of the first two issues—and a very clear label on the cover indicating the book was for mature readers—Marvel abruptly canceled the series out of what appeared to be a fear of the potential backlash from groups attempting to stifle the influx of horror-centered entertainment in the consumer market. Naturally, these groups picked up a familiar refrain from prior moral panics: they were convinced horror comics and movies were corrupting the minds of America's youths. "According to my best information," *Nightmare* writer Steve Gerber recalls in a letter to *Reading for Pleasure* #8 (January 1990), "Marvel canceled the book in anticipation of pressure from the various anti-violence advocate groups."

Authorities in Oklahoma arrested two retailers for the sale of *Verotika* #4.
(Published by Verotik, June 1995.)

The attack on horror entertainment coincided with the newly emergent crusade against violent video games led by government officials like Senator Joe Lieberman—a crusade that would lead to the formation of the industry-adopted regulatory group known as the ESRB—and violent content was very much a hot topic of discussion in the media. "A few weeks prior to the release of the first *Nightmare*, there had been an article published in *The New York Times* decrying the level of violence in comic books," says Gerber. "Apparently, that article, along with the picketing that took place outside theatres showing *Nightmare 5* in Los Angeles and elsewhere, was enough to make Marvel turn tail and run for cover."

Although fear would end Freddy Krueger's print reign of terror, the backlash against horror comics wasn't just felt by the creators and publishers. In 1997, the owners of Planet Comics in Oklahoma City, Michael Kennedy and John Hunter, were convicted of two felonies and labeled "dangerous criminals" and peddlers of obscene materials for selling copies of Verotik's extreme horror comic *Verotika* #4. The book, which was intended for adults only and heavily explored the boundaries of sexual violence, caught the eye of a local organization called Oklahomans for Children and Families. In response to a complaint, Kennedy and Hunter were arrested and charged with four felonies and four misdemeanors for trafficking in obscene materials—a potential 43-year jail sentence.

Kennedy and Hunter ultimately pled guilty to two felony charges, but the extreme reaction by police officials and community members left a mark on both Planet Comics and the comics industry as a whole. Whether you printed or sold violent comics, the message was the same: you could face community backlash and worse, including legal repercussions. As Susan Alston, then Executive Director of CBLDF, commented, "In human terms, we all share a sense of relief that Kennedy and Hunter's ordeal is over. But that in no way diminishes the fact that they were convicted in violation of their rights as Americans under the First Amendment. Their conviction will have a chilling effect on what retailers choose to display and sell in 'high risk' jurisdictions."

Jusko's unveiling of Marvel's unpublished *Nightmare* comic cover perfectly encapsulates a moment in American publication history, a period when the general public truly thought that the consumption of things like movies, comics, and video games would lead to violent behavior in American youths. Despite evidence to the contrary, that mindset still persists today.

Horror comics were targeted in particular by the Comics Code and generations of censors. The Code was a full-blast witch hunt aimed at any and all comics that displayed elements of horror. Those attacks remained pervasive even as the Code itself began to lose steam. As Gerber reminds us, "The cancellation of *Nightmare* is a textbook example of the 'chilling effect' you hear so much about these days in discussions of free speech. The book was killed not because it WAS criticized, but because the publishers FEARED it would be criticized."

Caitlin McCabe

Detail from the cover of *Black Panther* #1.
Artwork by Brian Stelfreeze.
(Black Panther © and ™ Marvel Comics. Used with permission.)

REBIRTH OF AN ICON

When Marvel announced that **Ta-Nehisi Coates** would be resurrecting T'Challa in the comics pages, most of the reporting focused on Coates's stature as a commentator and bestselling memoirist, whose works address the inequities that black men confront in contemporary society. The series has since become a hit, due in no small part to Coates's literary acclaim, the popularity of the movie version of the character, who debuted in this summer's ***Captain America: Civil War***, and a public desire for more diversity on the comics pages. Coates didn't succeed on his own. Behind him stood an artist who has redefined the king and kingdom of Wakanda: **Brian Stelfreeze.** We snagged a moment with the artist to talk diversity and censorship in comics.

interview by Betsy Gomez

What was it like for Black content and creators when you first got into comics and what has changed?

I think it was pretty open, but there wasn't a lot of content. The strange thing about when I got in is it was before the Internet. So, to a large extent, you really had no idea who was Black, who was White unless it was obvious in the name. So, with my name, no one really knew, and it's only within the last ten years that people have discovered that I am a Black guy.

That's interesting. How do you feel that the internet has changed that conversation beyond making it easier for people to identify you as Black?

I think in a lot of ways it's really opened things up. I think as a guy wanting to get into comics, there wasn't really any—there was artistic inspiration—but there wasn't any Black guys that I knew that were doing comics that I could go, "Yeah, that guy. I can follow his work," or anything like that. So I think now I get young Black guys coming up to me—guys and girls coming up to me—at conventions for inspiration, and we have that conversation. That's something that didn't exist, I think, 20, 30 years ago.

Let's talk about* Black Panther *a little bit. What's it like to take on one of the most respected and well-known Black superheroes?

It's actually kind of cool! Black Panther, he's one of those characters that doesn't have a regular comic out or anything like that, but everyone knows and, kind of surprisingly, everyone really respects the character. It's a character that I've always had an affinity for growing up, and it's kind of cool to be on that character.

He was a Black character, but there wasn't really any racial stuff around him. There wasn't something like Luke Cage, who spoke in Ebonics and had chains on his wrists and ankles. Black Panther was kind of royalty. He was a very respectable Black character. He wasn't part of the Blaxploitation movement that came into movies and comics in the late '60s and '70s. Because he was such a respectable character, we always really liked him, and now it's so much fun to kind of jump in on it, especially with Ta-Nehisi Coates doing the writing.

A lot of it comes down to Black Panther looking so hella cool, right?

Oh, yeah! And I think one of the things that is cool about the character is he's simple. It's one of the most simplest costumes in comics. It's kind of fun because it's like, if you can draw a naked guy, you've got Black Panther!

So, what's it like working with Ta-Nehisi Coates?

Before I started working with him, I was incredibly nervous because the stuff that he does—I believe you can do a comic based on that stuff, but it's a very independent comic if you did that.

But here he is, working on a Marvel superhero comic. I was really nervous because comics is a different style of writing, and it's a different style of storytelling. And I think a lot of the writers that come into comics, they have a tendency to overwrite stuff. They kind of put more emphasis on what people are saying and less emphasis on what people are doing, and the artist's role is almost superfluous at that point. So, I had that nervousness of him from the beginning, but when I read his first script, all of that changed. He really is doing a comic book, which is really exciting.

How do Ta-Nehisi's background, movements like Black Lives Matter, and conversations about racial inequity, influence* Black Panther*?

I think that type of stuff affects [Ta-Nehisi]; that type of stuff affects me. And as you know with creators, if that stuff affects us, it makes it through our art. He's not directly dealing with it—I mean at no point is there going to be anyone holding up a "Black Lives Matter" poster in *Black Panther*—but there are some influences from it.

In your experience, how has content by and about Black people been treated differently from the perspective of censorship and self-censorship in comics?

It's kind of a difficult question to take on. Mainly because I think comics, surprisingly, has been incredibly open. I think comics has been really accepting of a lot of different creators. And it's probably because of the fact that comics, when you compare them to other industries, we're dealing with thousands and thousands of dollars whereas the other industries—the movie industry, the music industry—they're often dealing with billions of dollars.

And it's such a small community, also. You can get into comics and just about know everyone in the business within a few years. We all meet up at conventions and things like that. So, I think overall there isn't a dramatic racial bias or anything like that. It's kind of a weird situation. I've never been hard discriminated against, I think, because comics creators, comics publishers, don't think there's a large Black audience out there. They have a tendency not to do stuff for what they believe is a smaller boutique readership.

Which means we still have work to do, right?

We have a ton of work to do. The cool thing about it is I really consider comics this sort of different storytelling form, this different art form. It occupies this really neat space that's between novels and movies. It's a visual medium, but at the same time it's something that you read—a lot of the action, a lot of the moments take place in your head, like when you're reading novels. It's a different art form, and I think comics is suitable for expressing a lot of different stories. I think there's an open audience that's ready for it.

When you take a look at the comics industry in Japan compared to the comics industry here, I mean we're getting there. We're seeing a lot of progressive stuff coming out of comics, but I think it's going to take a while before it becomes as ubiquitous as I'd like it to be.

Books from creators in underrepresented demographics, featuring minority characters or unfamiliar religions or gender identities are more likely to be targeted by censors. Why do you think that is?

I think that's probably because you have a situation where, if the community is White and all of the censors within the community are White, they see things that are White as just quiet. But when something from another race comes in, when something from another religion comes in, then it sort of makes them notice. I think more attention is paid to

Detail from *Black Panther* #1, page 8. Artwork by Brian Stelfreeze.

(Black Panther © and ™ Marvel Comics. Used with permission.)

that stuff. You really look at anything that's different.

I think you can have a book with White characters doing often times the same thing as a book with Black characters. Because they're White characters, the book isn't noticed. But now you put Black characters, Muslim characters in there, then it becomes a really big deal. I think the people around you, the people that you grew up with tend to be invisible. And if those people are all of one race, then they tend to be invisible, but you pay attention to things when they're different.

What would you tell these people who are trying to censor the books?

I'd say get out there more! I'd say have a broader group of friends, a broader group of associates. I'd say get to know more Black people, more Muslims.

One of the things that was really helpful to me was my dad was military, so every three years we would uproot and move to a different location; sometimes in the South, sometimes in the North. The group of people that I grew up with was constantly changing and constantly diverse. There'd be a bunch of times where I'd be in a school, and I'd be the only Black person in the entire school. But there'd be other times where I'd be in a school, and the demographic was more Hispanic. Honestly I didn't notice that dramatic a difference between the people themselves. We're all kind of the same group, you know?

Have you ever faced censorship or caught yourself self-censoring?

Oh yeah, definitely! I think you really can't avoid it. As a creator, especially if you want to cast a large voice, sometimes you get caught.

There are times, quite honestly, I've tried to go for it. Adam Hughes and I have these things called lightning rods, where we will just put something in the book or sort of say something that we know the editor's going to catch. Often times, the editors catch them. But if the editor doesn't, hey we pulled it off!

So, there are a bunch of harried editors out there in the world?

Yeah! And it's our job to justify their jobs.

Do you have any other thoughts on free expression and censorship?

I think for free expression and censorship, that's kind of a yin-yang that I think will always be there. I think we'll never get to a point where everyone will come to a decision on what speech should be. And I think because of that, creators should always push the boundaries. They should constantly try to say something. Especially if what they're saying it is not to blow things up, but to really bring about thought.

Those voices will constantly be censored. There will be constant attempts to quiet them. But I think people should keep doing it because what ultimately happens is the bar gets raised higher and higher and higher every time someone bumps up against it. I think it's important for creators to constantly bump up against that thing, and really shake things up.

I think it's kind of cool when you see movies, when you see novels, and even when you see comics today that are about such a broad range of things. It's cool for me to see lesbian characters, for me to see transsexual characters in comics and in movies to the point now where a gay character on television is really not that big a deal at all. I think it's really cool when we all become invisible. When we all become part of the whole, and no one kind of sticks their head up as being "the other."

Listen to a recording of this interview at http://cbldf.org/podcast/

BANNED BOOKS WEEK

SEPTEMBER 25 - OCTOBER 1

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

GET READY FOR BANNED BOOKS WEEK!

Why are so many diverse books banned? That's the question being asked by this year's Banned Books Week celebration. Read on to learn how you can get involved!

What kind of diverse material is attacked by censors?

According to the American Library Association, more than half of all banned books are by diverse authors or contain events and issues concerning diverse communities. In 2015, two comics were among the most challenged books in the United States: *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel and *Habibi* by Craig Thompson. Both have diverse content: *Fun Home* has LGBTQ characters and a female main character and creator, and *Habibi* has a non-Western setting and female main character. Other comics that have been challenged for LGBTQ content include Raina Telgemeier's *Drama*, Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*, and Howard Cruse's *Stuck Rubber Baby*.

Of the eight comics that have been included in ALA's ten frequently challenged books lists since 2011, six featured a female central character and four were created or co-created by a woman. While gender likely does not play a direct role in the challenges, censorship attempts disproportionately impact comics created by women and featuring female primary characters.

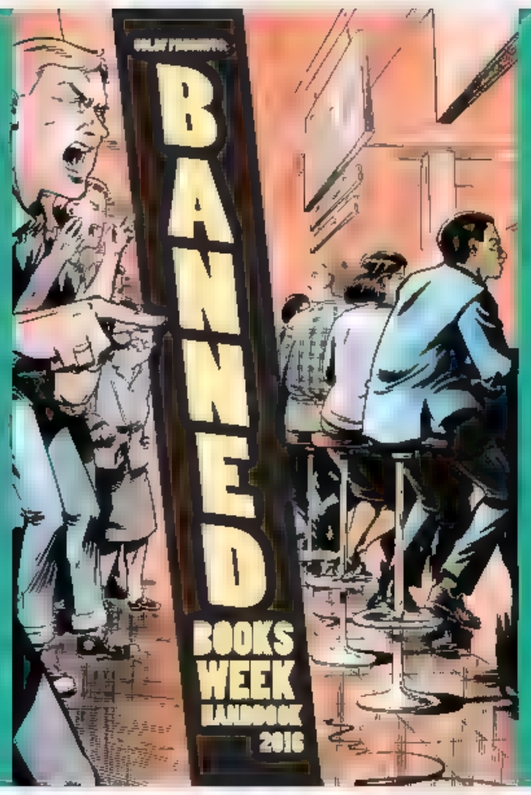
Comics by creators of color have also been attacked, including Gilbert Hernandez's *Palomar* and Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*. *Palomar* reflects the Chicano background of its creator and would undoubtedly engage diverse students. Some of the attacks on *Persepolis* focused specifically on the depiction of Islam.

Why is diversity important?

Diverse books enrich the educational experience and help readers engage with the world around them in a more holistic and realistic manner. For underrepresented groups, diverse books provide a reflection of the readers themselves. For other groups, diverse materials serve as a window into another cultural experience or existence. Diverse books also remind readers that people experience the world in many different ways, and that in spite of differences between cultures and belief systems, people have common emotions, desires, and motivations.

Why should I get involved?

Banned Books Week is a great opportunity for community engagement! Whether you're a reader, retailer, librarian, or educator, you can connect with your community and stand up for the right to read during Banned Books Week! From reading passages of banned and challenged books by diverse authors, to screening films that provide a glimpse into diverse communities, to administering speaking engagements or creative activities for your patrons, Banned Books Week is a time to encourage members of your community to speak out and to embrace diverse reading.



How can I celebrate Banned Books Week?

As an official sponsor of Banned Books Week, CBLDF has plenty of tools to help you make a celebration of the freedom to read!

- ✓ **CBLDF Banned Books Week Handbook 2016:** Learn what comics are banned and how to report and fight censorship! Featuring a cover by Nate Powell, artist of the groundbreaking civil rights memoir *March*! Available to view online ( ), in stores, and in the CBLDF Rewards Zone ( )
- **Posters, shelf talkers, and more:** CBLDF has lots of tools available on our website at
- **CBLDF Comics Connector:** Find a comics professional for your events at

Detail from Joyce Farmer's cover for *Tits & Clits* #2.

(© Joyce Farmer and Chin Lyvely Published by Nanny Goat Productions, July 1976.)

THE BUST

by Sam Meier

In 1973, Orange County, California, waged war on underground comix...

Joyce Farmer walked into Fahrenheit 451 Bookstore & Art Gallery the morning of December 4, 1973, feeling confident. She carried with her several copies of her new comic book *Pandora's Box*, fresh from the printer. Like Joyce's earlier comics, this one was best described as "blatantly outrageous."

Joyce didn't anticipate any problems in her hometown. True, Laguna Beach, California was not as good a market as San Francisco, but the owners of Fahrenheit 451 could usually be counted on for a small sale. After all, they knew Joyce's partner in Nanny Goat Productions, Lyn Chevli. Lyn had co-founded Fahrenheit 451 in 1968. Gordon and Evelyn Wilson bought the bookstore from Lyn in 1972, right before she and Joyce had embarked on their career in comics.

That day, though, there was to be no sale. Instead, a somber Evelyn told Joyce that Fahrenheit 451 couldn't carry her new book. The day before, she and her husband had been arrested for selling underground comic books. Lyn and Joyce should take care, said Evie. They were likely to be next.

§

Five days before the Wilsons' arrest, Laguna Beach Police detective Anthony Smith had stopped by Fahrenheit 451. The store's collection of underground comics caught Detective Smith's eye. The Wilsons hadn't given much thought to the comic books, which they had inherited along with the rest of their stock. Neither considered themselves a fan, since underground comix were not what they would call literature. Smith picked up four of the comic books—*Wimmen's Comix*, *Greaser*, *Zap Comix* #5, and *El Perfecto*. He then headed to the district attorney's office. The office found three of the comics to be "without redeeming social value," reported the *Daily Pilot*. The D.A. issued a court warrant for the Wilsons on the charges of selling and distributing obscene materials, a misdemeanor crime.

The following Monday, December 3, Evelyn Wilson was placed under arrest. After searching the Wilsons' small apartment above the bookstore, the police escorted Evie to the police station, where they took her fingerprints and mug shots, as they did for Gordon when he arrived. The Wilsons paid $500 bail—$250 each, the couple's Christmas money—and were released.

§

Joyce understood the significance of the Wilsons' arrest immediately. Leaving Fahrenheit 451, Joyce headed to Lyn's apartment to tell her what had happened. The two women quickly arrived at the conclusion that they, not the Wilsons, were the real targets of the bust. The police must have thought that Lyn still owned Fahrenheit 451 and that busting the bookstore would lead them directly to Lyn and Joyce's underground comix business.

Under the banner of Nanny Goat Productions, the duo had been producing and publishing raunchy comics since 1972. Their three comic books—*Tits & Clits*, *Abortion Eve*, and *Pandora's Box*—explored the vagaries of vaginas from menstrual blood to yeast infections. While Lyn and Joyce did not consider their work to be obscene, they knew that other people did. "Our comic T&C was declared obscene by the DA but so far has missed all publicity, either because they aren't smart enough to find us ('they' being the Local Police Dept.) or because they are working on getting us and don't want to talk," wrote Joyce to her friend Clay Geerdes on December 6.

Deputy District Attorney John Anderson had told the *Daily Pilot* on December 5 that his office was doing all it could "to track down these printers and publishers and writers of this kind of book." While the Fahrenheit 451 case was the first of its kind in Orange County, bookstores across California had been busted for selling underground comix. Anderson added that it was ""kind of too bad' that little people like the Wilsons got swept up in the smut net... [but] 'that's the quickest way to get to publishers.'"

Publishers, in this case, seemed to mean Joyce and Lyn. The pair immediately sought legal advice from a lawyer friend, who told them to get rid of anything and everything linking them to Nanny Goat Productions. That evening, Joyce and Lyn toted box after box of comics from Joyce's art studio and Lyn's apartment to a truck they had borrowed. Around 50 friends and neighbors offered their assistance, their spare closets, and their garages. From 8:00 P.M. until 2:00. A.M., the women of Nanny Goat spread their smut all over town before collapsing, exhausted.

§

The next morning, reporter Jack Chappell of the *Daily Pilot* confirmed what Lyn and Joyce suspected. "Laguna Bookstore Owners Pawns in Smut Campaign?" read the front page on Wednesday, December 6. Though Orange County Deputy D.A. Oretta Sears refused to call the Wilsons' arrest a "test case" for establishing underground comix as obscene, Chappell noted that "a successful prosecution could set a county precedent." Armed with new court rulings regarding California's obscenity laws, factoring in the Supreme Court decision in *Miller v. California*, legal authorities across the county were moving aggressively against pornography. Lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union agreed to take the Wilsons' case.

As the days passed and nothing happened, Lyn and Joyce began to relax, though not completely. In early January 1974, they moved their entire inventory out of Laguna Beach. Having been advised not to produce more books until the Wilsons went to trial, Joyce and Lyn worked on grant applications for health education comic books. They toyed around with the idea of a feminist art gallery. They brainstormed a "straight" newspaper strip about a post-menstrual cat named Persephone. But neither felt energized by their new work, nor safe in creating it. Lyn wrote to her friend Don Baumgart on January 12, "Frankly I think I'm incapable of reform. I've been trying to project the image of a LADY lately and people just look at me as if I'm an android."

"The attorneys said they were sure Lyn and I were in for it and expressed surprise that we ended up with as little trouble as we did."

The Wilsons' case dragged on. Initially meant to go to jury on January 25, the ACLU lawyers managed to forestall the hearing further, hoping for a new ruling on pornography, either in California or federally. Eleven months later, in November, the Wilsons' trial date was finally set: February 28, 1975.

"Remember the near bust of us a couple of years ago?" Joyce asked her fellow underground publisher Ron Turner in a letter dated October 27, 1975. "We had lunch with the ACLU lawyers today and that case against the bookstore owners still hasn't been dismissed, tho [sic] it should be next month. The attorneys said they were sure Lyn and I were in for it and expressed surprise that we ended up with as little trouble as we did."

A few days later, nearly two years after their arrest, the charges against the Wilsons were dropped on October 31, 1975. The District Attorney's office "felt the comic books no longer would be considered obscene under contemporary community standards," according to the *L.A. Times*.

Read a longer version of this story online at www.cbldf.org!

COMING SOON

CBLDF Presents: She Changed Comics

Art & story: various

She Changed Comics is the definitive history of the women who changed free expression in comics, with profiles of more than 60 groundbreaking female professionals and interviews with the women who are changing today's medium! A must for readers of all ages, students, and educators. Available October 5, 2016! ($14.99 print, $11.99 digital)

CBLDF Presents: Liberty Annual 2016

Art & story: various
Cover A: Nate Powell
Cover B: Brandon Graham

Be the change! CBLDF salutes the real people who changed the world, from suffragettes to sports legends, creative visionaries to courageous citizens who took a stand. *CBLDF Liberty Annual 2016* will inspire readers to build a better world by telling the stories of the people who did just that! All proceeds from this benefit anthology support CBLDF's important work protecting the freedom to read. Available November 2, 2016! ($4.99; Cover A: Diamond code SEP160655; Cover B: Diamond code SEP160656)

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 9: Rose City Comic-Con 2016 Kick-off Party

- Wacom Experience Center, Portland, Oregon
- https://www.facebook.com/events/1176377775779277/

September 17–18, 2016: Small Press Expo

- Marriott North Bethesda Hotel & Conference Center, Bethesda, Maryland
- Booth W84-87
- www.smallpressexpo.com

October 6–9, 2016: New York Comic Con

- Javits Center, New York City, New York
- www.newyorkcomiccon.com

October 8–9, 2016: GeekGirlCon

- The Conference Center, Seattle, Washington
- http://geekgirlcon.com

November 5, 2016: Vegas Valley Comic Book Festival

- Clark County Library, Las Vegas, Nevada
- www.vegasvalleycomicbookfestival.org

Schedule subject to change. Visit cbldf.org for updates.

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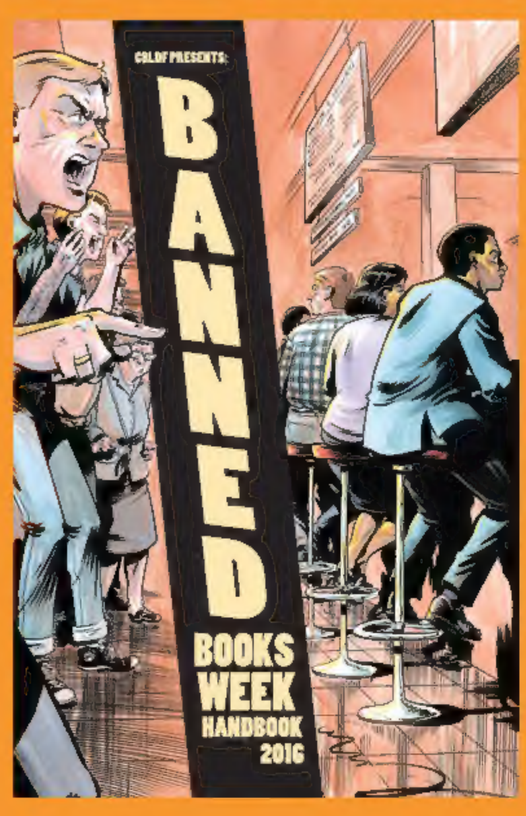

CBLDF Presents: Banned Books Week Handbook 2016

Art & story: various
Cover: Nate Powell

The *CBLDF Banned Books Week Handbook* provides everything you need to make a celebration of diverse books for Banned Books Week and beyond! ($15 donation for bundle of 50; http://tinyurl.com/h5mfma8)

PREMIUMS SPOTLIGHT

Show off your support of the freedom to read comics with our exclusive **Comics Code embroidered patch** ($12 donation, http://tinyurl.com/jgtqmm5) and the **Comics Code enamel pin** ($12 donation, http://tinyurl.com/z928psh)! And get the latest in anti-censorship technology: the **CBLDF Pencil Set** ($7.50 donation, http://tinyurl.com/zyde6da). Free expression starts here!

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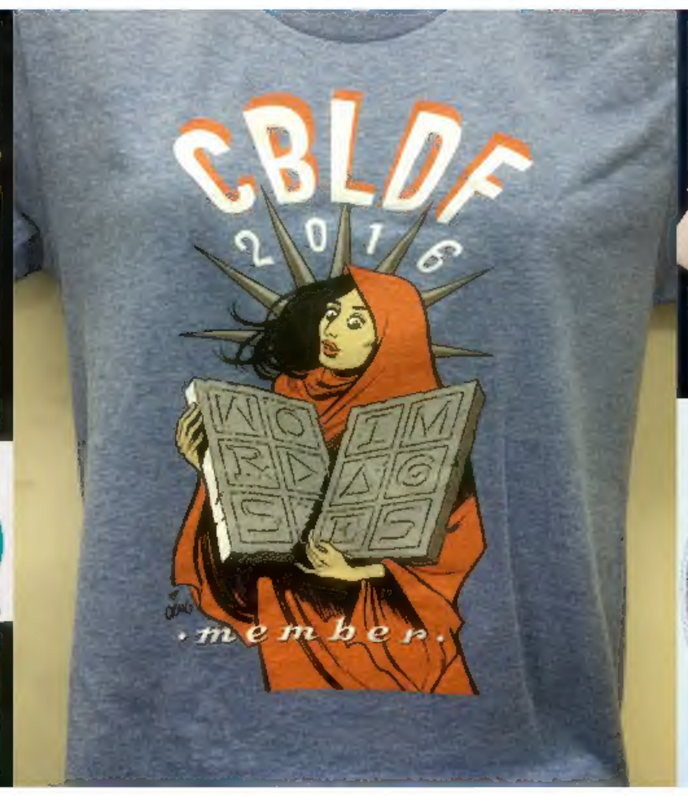
JOIN THE FIGHT!

Joining the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund puts you on the front lines of the fight against censorship! When you join CBLDF, we'll thank you with the best incentives and benefits in the free speech community, starting off with a stunning membership card by cartoonist Craig Thompson! We have membership plans for donors in every budget, and all of them are tax-deductible:

- ✓ **Member ($100):** CBLDF membership card, CBLDF button set, CBLDF sticker set, CBLDF pocket sketchbook, CBLDF member patch, and EXCLUSIVE member-only t-shirt featuring Craig Thompson's gorgeous art!
- ✓ **Associate Member ($30):** CBLDF membership card
- ✓ **Supporter Member ($50):** CBLDF membership card, CBLDF button set, CBLDF sticker set, CBLDF pocket sketchbook, CBLDF member patch!
- ✓ **Defender Member ($250):** All of the above, plus the CBLDF water bottle and *CBLDF Liberty Annual* Volume 1!
- ✓ **Protector Member ($500):** All of the above, plus an exclusive embossed executive Moleskine journal!
- ✓ **Champion Member ($1,000):** All of the above, plus recognition in *CBLDF Liberty Annual* 2016 and the CBLDF executive messenger bag!
- ✓ **Guardian Member ($2,500):** All of the above, plus special recognition in select CBLDF publications throughout 2016!

Art by Craig Thompson

Use the signup form on the back cover of this magazine or visit http://cbldf.myshopify.com/collections/memberships to join today!



RADIO FREE COMIX!

CBLDF is now part of the audio-sphere! A mix of interviews, discussions about censorship, convention panel recordings, and archival materials, the CBLDF Podcast is a monthly event, from our keyboards to your ears. Lay your ears on the recording of the full interview featured in this issue: *Black Panther* artist **Brian Stelfreeze!** The CBLDF Podcast is made possible in part by a donation from the Gaiman Foundation and member support.

Listen at http://cbldf.org/podcast

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